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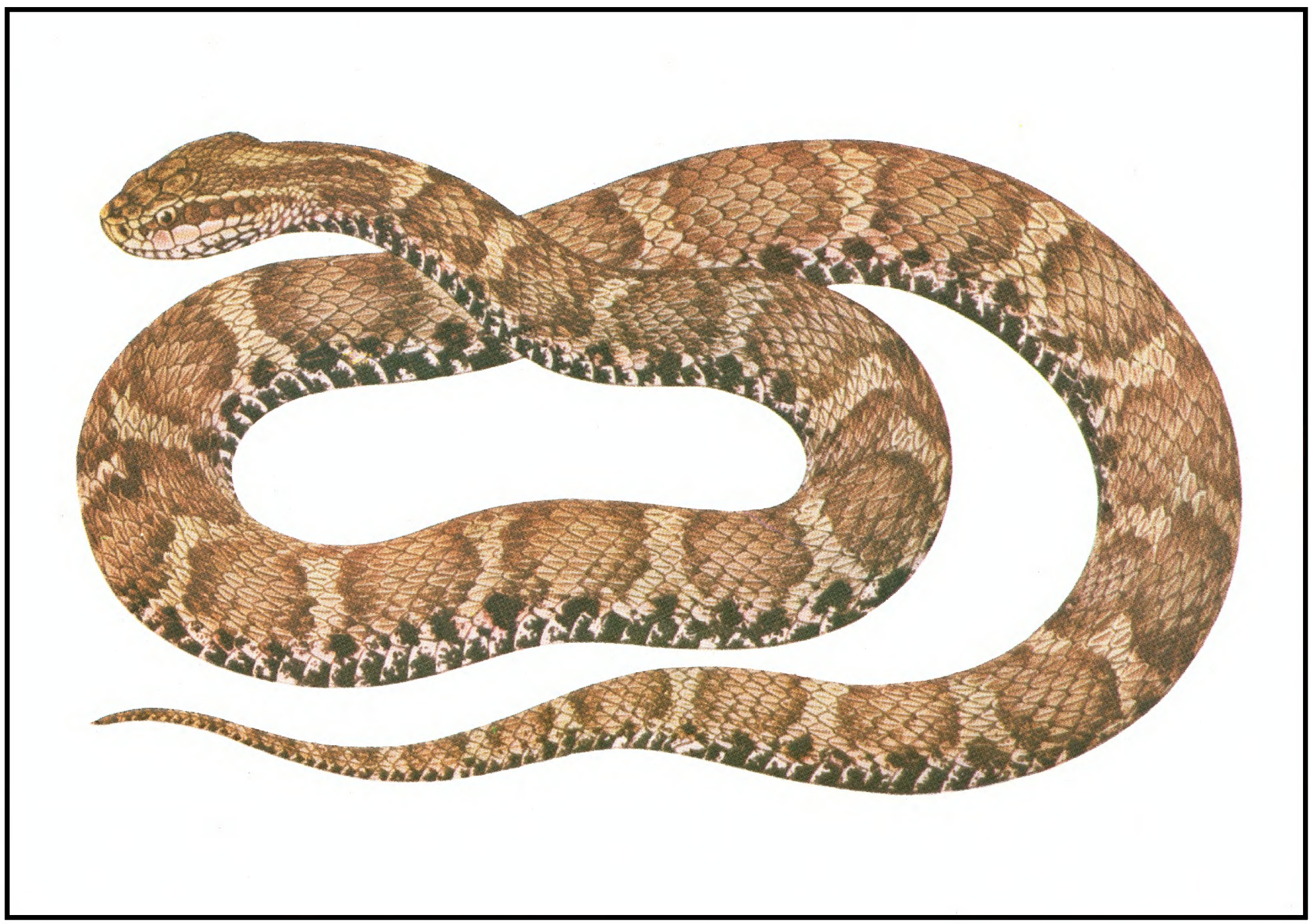

BULLETIN OF THE CHICAGO HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY
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Six Serendipitous *Pseudemys* Sightings in Southern Illinois

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Abstract

River Cooters (*Pseudemys concinna*) are known from the Ohio River and Mississippi River watersheds of southern Illinois, and are listed as state Endangered. The true conservation status of River Cooters in Illinois is uncertain, however, because focused surveys have been inadequate and incidental sightings are infrequently reported. We chronicle six serendipitous, up-close encounters with River Cooters in the Cache River and Clear Creek watersheds of southernmost Illinois, from 2018 through 2024.

Introduction

River Cooters (*Pseudemys concinna*) are large emydid turtles attaining a carapace length of up to 37.5 centimeters (14.75 inches; Powell et al., 2016), with the largest Illinois specimen measuring 34 centimeters (13.4 inches) long (Phillips et al., 2022). River Cooters are characterized by a pattern of yellow or yellow-orange concentric circles on each carapacial scute, some of which may form a "C" shape on one or more pleural scutes (also referred to as costal scutes by some authorities). The plastron is unmarked or marked with dark pigment that tends to follow the seams of the scutes (Powell et al., 2016). The species inhabits large rivers, together with their tributaries and backwaters, from eastern Texas, Oklahoma, and southeastern Kansas eastward to Georgia, the Carolinas and Virginia (Powell et al., 2016). In Illinois, they range northward along the Mississippi River to Jersey County, and along the Ohio and Wabash Rivers northward to Wabash County (Smith, 1961; Phillips et al., 2022).

River Cooters were first reported from Illinois by Garman (1890), and were once thought to be extirpated from the state (Morris et al., 1983). However, focused surveys combined with incidental sightings verified the continued existence of the species in Illinois (Moll and Morris, 1991). The most recent River Cooter sightings in the Ohio River system of Illinois have been in floodplain lakes and ponds associated with the Ohio, Wabash, and Little Wabash Rivers between Alexander County and Gallatin County (Moll and Morris, 1991; Dreslik, 1997, 1998; Dreslik et al., 2003, 2005; Readel and Phillips, 2008), the Saline River in Gallatin County (Illinois Natural History Survey photo voucher 42922), and the Cache River in Johnson and Union Counties (Palis, 2004; Dreslik, 2007). River Cooter sightings in the Mississippi River drainage are much less common, and for several counties are many decades old (Phillips et al., 1999). The most recent Mississippi River basin River Cooter observation comes from Clear Creek in Union County (Palis, 2013). Due to their scarcity and human modification of habitat, River Cooters are listed as Endangered in Illinois (Phillips et al., 1999, 2022). However, the distribution and population status of River Cooters in Illinois remains enigmatic as observations are infrequently reported. Palis (2013) reported two fortuitous River Cooter encounters in southernmost Illinois observed 10 years apart. Here, we report six additional serendipitous River Cooter sightings in southern Illinois. Although we have other probable sightings of basking River Cooters, we limit this narrative to unambiguous sightings made after 2013, and for which we have good quality digital images.

River Cooter sightings

Sighting 1: During the afternoon of 18 June 2018, SJK detected an adult River Cooter in the Cache River below the Heron Pond Trail bridge, Johnson County (Figure 1). The turtle had exceptionally long nails on its forelimbs which is characteristic of male *Pseudemys* (Powell et al., 2016). The dark carapace was coated in algae which obscured most of the pattern. However, enough pattern was visible to positively identify the turtle as a River Cooter. The plastron was also dark, but without a discernable pattern. The plastron was scratched and pitted, perhaps a result of prolonged contact with the rocky, bedrock-bottomed portion of the river near the bridge.

Sighting 2: On the morning of 1 June 2021, TSG discovered an adult River Cooter lying upside down in his yard which is near the southern terminus of Wildcat Bluff Road, Johnson County (Figure 2; iNaturalist record 81170575). The turtle apparently had been handled by one of TSG's dogs. In addition to the distinctive pattern of concentric lines, the turtle's carapace was marked with three rear-facing, C-shaped markings on pleural scutes. The carapace also had multiple, longitudinal, parallel grooves in the pleural scutes. The plastron was unmarked except for very faint, indistinct patches of pigment. Relatively short nails on the forefeet suggest that it may have been a female. The provenance of the turtle is unknown. It may have originated from the Cache River floodplain swamp below Wildcat Bluff, approximately 200 meters (218 yards) to the south, or from one of three ponds on the Gerard property.

Sighting 3: At 1440, 17 October 2022, JGP found the shell of an adult River Cooter on the bank of a wetland near Clear Creek, Union County (Figure 3; Illinois Natural History Survey photo

1. P.O. Box 387, Jonesboro, IL 62952.
2. 1540 Wildcat Bluff Rd, Vienna, IL 62995.
3. 104 Lincoln St, Anna, IL 62906.
4. 865 Poplar Rd, Tunnel Hill, IL 62972.
5. 34 Crosby Ln, Carbondale, IL 62902.

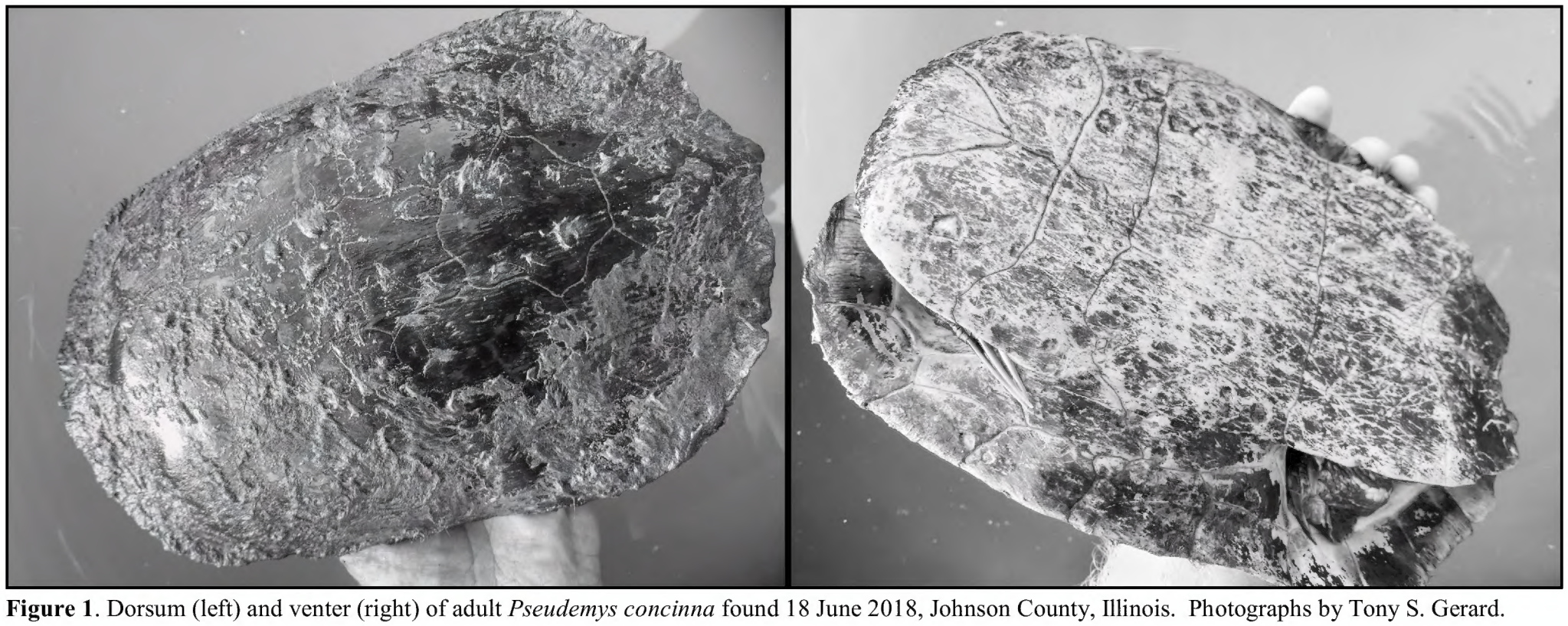

Figure 1. Dorsum (left) and venter (right) of adult *Pseudemys concinna* found 18 June 2018, Johnson County, Illinois. Photographs by Tony S. Gerard.

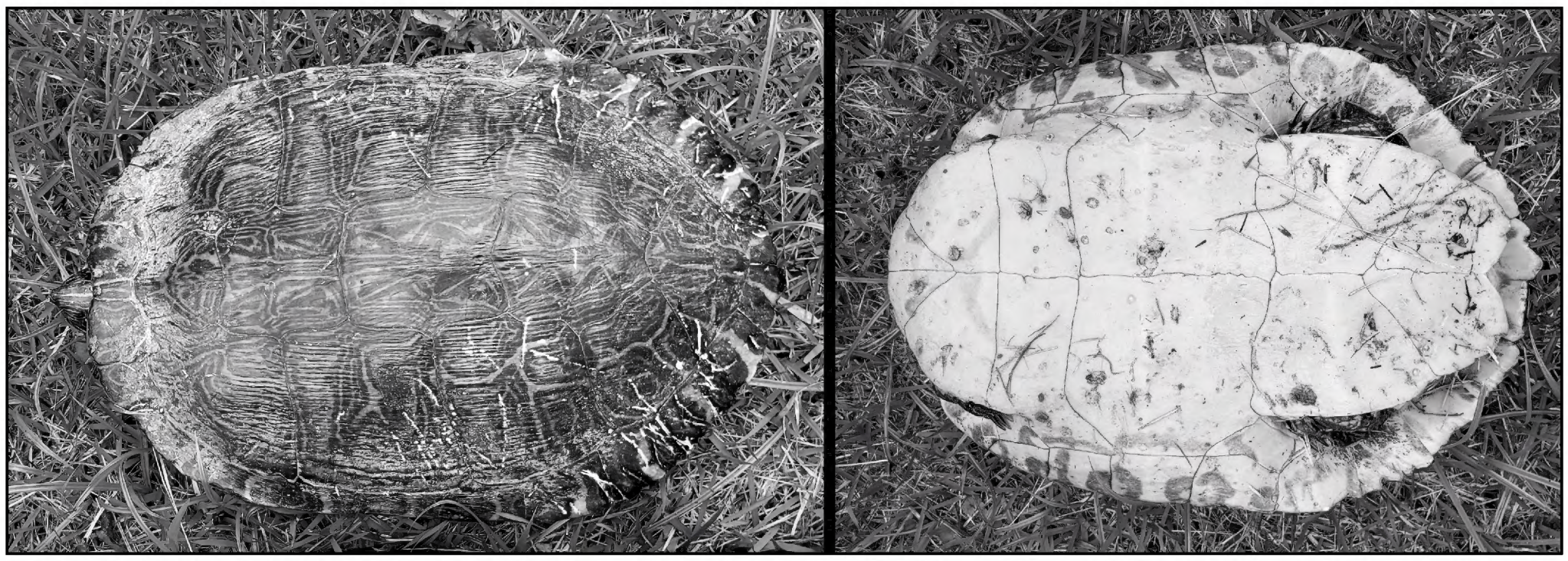

Figure 2. Dorsum (left) and venter (right) of adult *Pseudemys concinna* found 1 June 2021, Johnson County, Illinois. Photographs by Tony S. Gerard.

Figure 3. Carapace (left) and plastron (right) of adult *Pseudemys concinna* shell found 17 October 2022, Union County, Illinois. Photographs by John G. Palis.

Figure 4. Dorsum (left) and anterior (right) of juvenile *Pseudemys concinna* found 1 July 2023, Union County, Illinois. Photographs by Jeremy J. Schumacher.

Figure 5. Carapace (left) and plastron (right) of adult *Pseudemys concinna* shell found 6 April 2024, Massac County, Illinois. Photographs by John G. Palis.

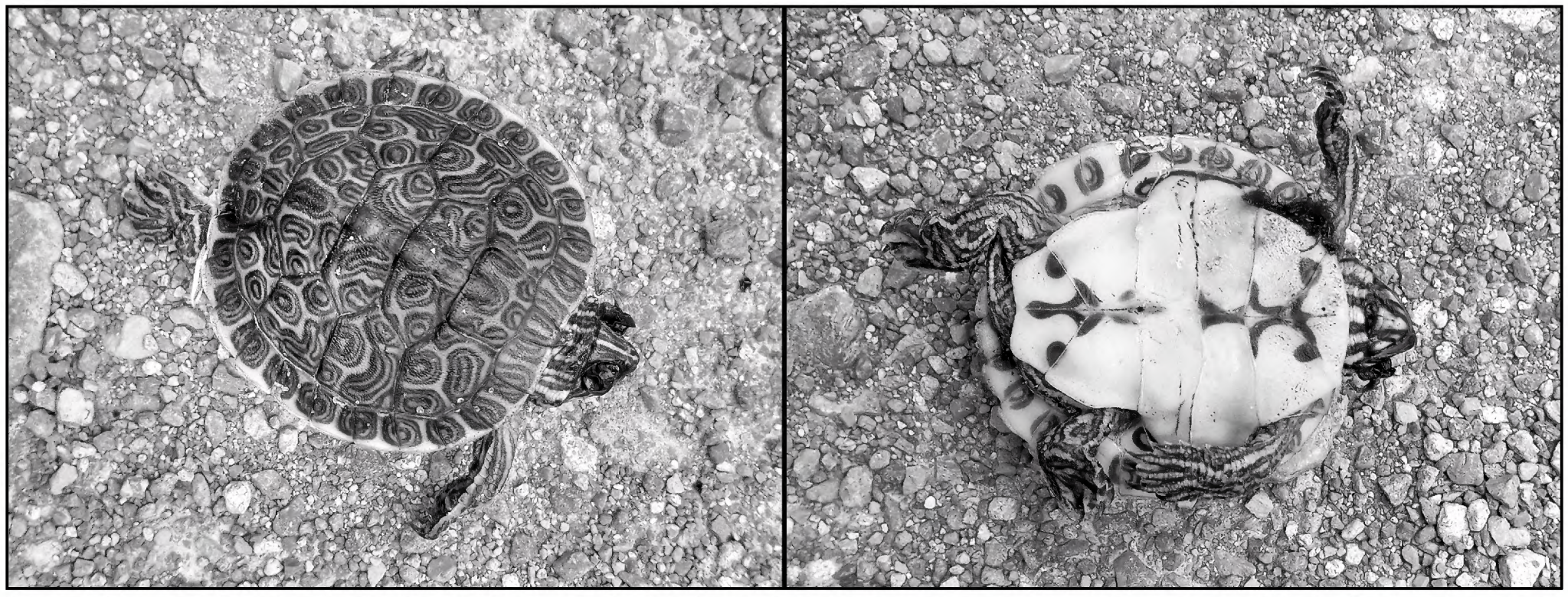

Figure 6. Dorsum (left) and venter (right) of dead-on-road hatchling *Pseudemys concinna* found 1 May 2024, Massac County, Illinois. Photograph by John G. Palis.

voucher 44854). The carapace was 29 centimeters (11.4 inches) long, maximum plastron length was 27 centimeters (10.6 inches), shortest plastron length (measured to anterior plastral notch) was 25.7 centimeters (10.1 inches), and maximum shell depth was 10.1 centimeters (4 inches). The carapace was light in color and the distinctive pattern of concentric lines was readily discernable. The plastron was unmarked.

Sighting 4: At approximately 1045, 1 July 2023, JAS and JJS encountered a juvenile River Cooter on State Forest Road, near the eastern boundary of Trail of Tears State Forest, Union County (Figure 4; HerpMapper record 422189). The carapace was estimated to be 15 centimeters (6 inches) long and exhibited a backwards-facing "C" on at least one pleural scute. The turtle's plastron was not photographed. The nearest water body is Cany Creek, a rocky intermittent stream that empties into Dutch Creek, a tributary of Clear Creek.

Sighting 5: In the afternoon of 6 April 2024, JGP and MAK found the shell of an adult River Cooter on the shore of Mermet Lake, Massac County (Figure 5; INHS photo voucher 44855). The carapace length was 28 centimeters (11 inches), maximum plastron length was 24.1 centimeters (9.5 inches), shortest plastron length was 23.2 centimeters (9.1 inches), and maximum shell depth was 9.5 centimeters (3.75 inches). The carapace was rather dark, rendering the distinctive pattern somewhat obscure. The carapace had multiple, longitudinal, parallel grooves in pleural scutes and outer portions of vertebral scutes. Grayish pigment followed the interior portions of the seam between the gular and humeral scutes, along the interior seam between humeral scutes, and along the interior portion of seams between humeral and pectoral scutes of the plastron.

Sighting 6: At 1355, 1 May 2024, MAK and JGP found a recently deceased hatchling River Cooter on the road around Mermet Lake (Figure 6; INHS photo voucher 44856). The turtle was not observed at the same location 5.5 hours earlier. It was found 160 meters (175 yards) from the lake and may have overwintered in the nest. The carapace was yellow-green with multiple, concentric circles on the scutes, including a backwards "C" on three pleural scutes. Dark pigment followed the seam between the gular and humeral scutes, as well as interior seams of the humeral, pectoral, femoral, and anal scutes of the plastron. There were two dark spots on each anal scute at the juncture of each femoral scute. An umbilical scar (4 millimeters long and 2 millimeters wide) was still visible on the plastron at the seam between the abdominal scutes. The carapace was round, 3.8 centimeters (1.5 inches) long and wide, and plastron length was 3.5 centimeters (1.4 inches). The turtle may have been killed by a passing vehicle or a riding lawn mower (Illinois Department of Natural Resources personnel mowed the grass along the road that morning).

Discussion

We report six firsthand River Cooter sightings from two watersheds of southern Illinois. We limit this account to River Cooters for which we have up-close digital images. We have additional probable sightings of River Cooters from the region, but we do not include them here because we were unable to confidently rule out the possibility that the turtles in question were large Pond Sliders (*Trachemys scripta*). River Cooters are extremely wary and can be difficult to approach and positively identify. Furthermore, the shells of southern Illinois turtles are sometimes coated with silt or a growth of algae which obscures characteristic species-specific color patterns when viewed from a distance.

Our sightings confirm the continued presence of River Cooters in the Cache River and Clear Creek watersheds (Dreslik, 2007; Palis, 2013) including, insofar as we are aware, the first confirmed observations for Mermet Lake. Mermet Lake was surveyed for turtles between 2005 and 2010, but River Cooters were not detected (Bluett et al., 2011). The turtle survey was conducted using hoop nets baited with fish. River Cooters are rarely captured in nets baited with fish because they primarily consume vegetation (Dreslik, 1999, 2007). The most recent confirmed sighting of River Cooters in Massac County prior to our sightings was 2006, when one was captured in an Ohio River floodplain lake near Brookport (Readel and Phillips, 2008).

Our observation of a juvenile River Cooter in the Clear Creek watershed is noteworthy, as is the turtle's considerable distance from a permanent body of water. Our observation of a hatchling River Cooter at Mermet Lake also provides evidence of reproduction in the Cache River basin.

Most surveys for River Cooters in southern Illinois are conducted in backwaters associated with large rivers (Moll and Morris, 1991; Dreslik, 1998, 2007; Readel and Phillips, 2008). Our recent incidental River Cooter sightings suggest that surveys should be expanded to include watersheds of big river tributary streams. We echo Dreslik (2007) and encourage additional surveys for River Cooters in Illinois.

Acknowledgments

We thank Andrew Kuhns for sharing the Saline River photo record, Mike Dreslik for confirming the identification of JAS and JJS's juvenile River Cooter, Enrique Santoyo-Brito for providing INHS catalog numbers, and Mike Dloogatch for calling our attention to a reference.

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False Coral Snake versus False Coral snake in Veracruz, Mexico: First Record of *Ninia sebae* (Squamata: Colubridae) as Prey of *Lampropeltis polyzona* (Squamata: Colubridae)

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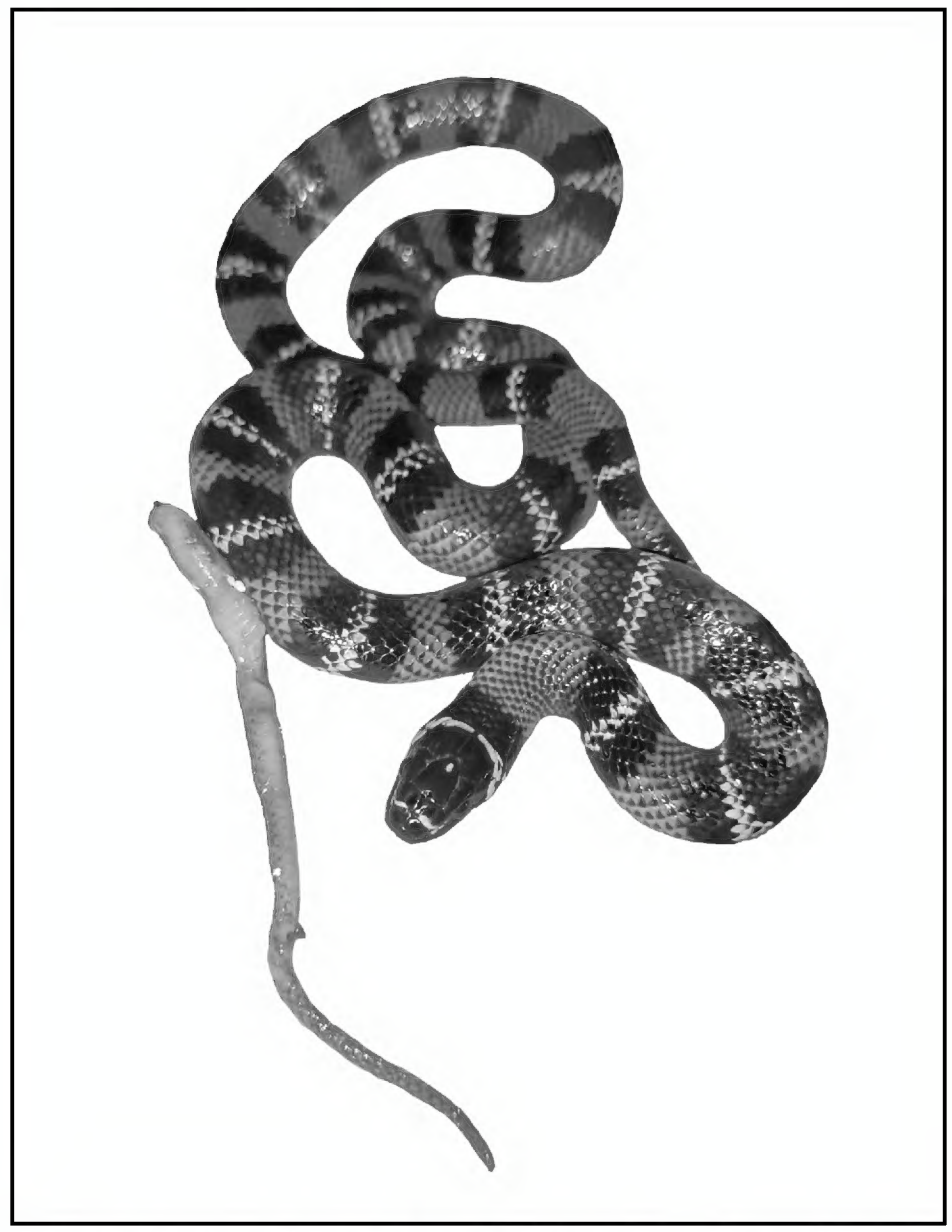
Following Ruane et al. (2014), *Lampropeltis polyzona* Cope, 1860, ranges widely along both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts of Mexico, from southern Sonora and northern Veracruz south to at least northern Guerrero and northern Oaxaca. In México, the diet of *L. polyzona* consists of mostly of reptiles (lizards, snakes, and their eggs) and small mammals (rodents and shrews) (Vásquez-Cruz, 2020; Piñango-Bustamante et al., 2022; Fernández-Rojas et al., 2022). Snake species reported in the diet of *L. polyzona* are *Coniophanes fissidens* (Günther 1858) and *Leptodeira septentrionalis* (Kennicott 1859) (Vásquez-Cruz, 2020).

Ninia sebae (Duméril, Bibron & Duméril, 1854) is a small snake with a wide distribution in the lowlands and premontane slopes from central Veracruz on the Atlantic versant and from sourthern Oaxaca on the Pacific southward to Costa Rica (Heimes, 2016), Known predators of *N. sebae* are tarantulas (*Schizopelma* sp.; Aguilar López et al., 2014), the bird *Quiscalus mexicanus* (Gmelin, 1788) (Vásquez-Cruz, 2019), and the snakes *Micrurus diastema* (Duméril, Bibron & Duméril, 1854) (West et al., 2019), *M. nigrocinctus* (Girard, 1854) (Savage, 2002) and *Erythrolamprus mimus* (Cope, 1868) (Schmidt, 1932).

Herein, we present the first record of predator-prey interaction between the false coral snakes *Lampropeltis polyzona* and *Ninia sebae* in central Veracruz, Mexico. On 31 December 2023, at 17:30 h, we found a juvenile of *Lampropeltis polyzona* in the locality of Cuautlapan (18.8766°N, 97.01689W°; WGS 84; elev. 995 m) in the municipality of Ixtaczoquitlán. The snake was found under a rock. While being handled for photography, the organism regurgitated a partially digested *Ninia sebae* snake (Figure 1). The identification of the prey was by comparing characteristics with species recorded in the locality of Cuautlapan (Cerón de la Luz et al., 2016). It was a small reddish organism with keeled scales and without any constant pattern, characteristic of *Ninia sebae* (Heimes, 2016).

Recently, Vásquez-Cruz (2020) compiled the prey species recorded in the literature as well as reports from unpublished data, obtaining 20 prey items, concluding that *L. polyzona* feeds primarily on reptiles, occasionally on mammals and rarely on birds and reptile eggs. The record reported here is consistent with the hypothesis of Vásquez-Cruz (2020) that *L. polyzona* is primarily a reptile predator. Furthermore, ophiophagy is likely to be frequent in *L. polyzona*, as it occurs in other species of the genus (e.g., Fitch and Fleet, 1970; Ernst and Ernst, 2003; Cotten et al., 2008). As for *Ninia sebae*, it is a species of false coral that is widely distributed and harmless, making it potentially an important prey for different clades such as invertebrates, birds and other snakes. It is important to continue studying the diet of snakes to better understand their roles as predator or prey.



A juvenile *Lampropeltis polyzona* with its prey item—the caudal region of a *Ninia sebae*.

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Attempted Predation by a Red-winged Blackbird on a Hatchling Painted Turtle

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Abstract

Painted turtles (*Chrysemys picta*) likely provide an important source of calories and protein for various predatory birds but published reports of avian predation on this species have been relatively limited. Here, we document an apparent predation attempt by a red-winged blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) on a painted turtle hatchling in Winnebago County, Wisconsin, in May 2024.

Painted turtles (*Chrysemys picta*) are one of North America's most broadly distributed turtle species, occurring across much of southern Canada and the northern United States from the Pacific Northwest across the Central Plains and Midwest to the south-eastern Atlantic states. The species is "usually the most abundant turtle in suitable shallow waterbodies within its range" (Ernst et al., 1994). These turtles undoubtedly provide an important source of calories and protein for a wide variety of predators. While depredation of painted turtle eggs is well documented (Ernst and Lovich, 2009), detailed accounts of predation on painted turtle hatchlings and adults are largely anecdotal and remain relatively limited even though they are one of the most observable turtle species. Previously reported avian predators include king rails (*Rallus elegans*), great blue herons (*Ardea herodias*), American bitterns (*Botaurus lentiginosus*), green herons (*Butorides virescens*), great egrets (*Ardea alba*), snowy egrets (*Egretta thula*), bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*), screech owls (*Megascops asio*), red-shouldered hawks (*Buteo lineatus*), northern harriers (*Circus hudsonius*), common ravens (*Corvus corax*), and American crows *C. brachyrhynchos*) (Imler and Kalmbach, 1955; Postupalsky and Kleiman, 1965; Wilbur, 1975; Welch, 1987; Ernst and Lovich, 2009; Marchand, 2019). Here, we report a recent observation of an apparent predation attempt by a red-winged blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*).

Menominee Park is a popular "destination" park on the east

Figure 1. Hatchling painted turtle dropped by a red-winged blackbird. Photograph by Janet Macklin.

side of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, along the shores of Lake Winne bago (Winnebago County). Named for Native American people who once inhabited the area and managed by the city, the park contains two lagoons, Miller's Bay, a playground, an amusement park and a zoo. A children's train ride runs around a pond, over a small bridge, and through a "tunnel." On 5 May 2024, one of us (JM) was biking near the railroad trestle at approximately 13:30 and observed an adult male red-winged blackbird flying over the trail carrying something in its beak.

The bird flew south-southwest from Miller's Bay to the northernmost lagoon. As it passed over the trail it dropped what it was carrying, possibly due to being startled by the motion of the bike rider. The dropped object, which fell approximately 3 m, landed on the trail pavement. Initially thought to be a very large beetle, the object turned out to be a hatchling painted turtle, which landed upside down on its carapace (Figure 1). The hatchling measured approximately 3.5 cm across the back. It was alive and appeared unharmed with no obvious damage to its head, limbs, or soft body parts. After examination and photographs, the hatchling was placed upright and released at the northern edge of the lagoon.

Biologists have published numerous references regarding the food habits of red-winged blackbirds (Crase and DeHaven, 1975; Linz et al., 2017). These studies reveal red-winged blackbirds have nonspecialized, flexible diets with food selection dependent on availability. Seeds of weeds and farm crops comprise most of the diet (Allen, 1914; Martin et al., 1951), and the feeding activity of larger flocks can result in damage to agricultural crops. However, blackbirds feeding on insects (e.g., aphids, corn borers, seed weevils, grasshoppers) and weed seeds that are damaging to crops may directly benefit agriculture (Bird and Smith, 1964; McNicol et al., 1982; Homan et al., 1994; Linz et al., 2017). Various studies have revealed seasonal changes in feeding where a high protein diet (mostly insects) is consumed during the mating and nesting periods. For example, in a study carried out in north central Ohio, Stockdale (1959) found adult blackbird gizzards contained 26% animal matter during the nesting period and 62% animal matter during the fledging period.

Figure 2. Hatchling painted turtle after being turned upright and released. Photograph by Janet Macklin.

In southern Ontario, animal matter constituted 82% of the stomach contents in early summer, 36% in mid-summer, and 11% in late summer (Hintz and Dyer, 1970). Similarly, McNicol et al. (1994) found insects comprised as much as 51% to 84% of blackbird diets during the period when they had nestlings. Insects tend to be plentiful in the marsh habitats where blackbirds nest and such shifts in feeding habits likely help provide diets high in calories and protein for the rapidly growing nestlings (Morton, 1973). Once the fledglings leave the nest, the birds move into upland areas and exploit both standing agricultural crop seeds, and then waste grains later in the fall (Linz et al., 1983, 1984; Homan et al., 1994).

Although insects seem to be preferred animal foods, red-winged blackbirds consume a variety of animal prey. Blackbirds rely on visual cues to detect their prey (Greene, 1988) and blackbirds have been observed feeding at the water-surface, on mats of American waterweed (*Elodea canadensis*) (Richardson, 1947). Both these habits could enhance the birds' chances of encountering turtles. Food size, food type, and foraging location may help maximize feeding efficiency (Wilson, 1978). Although these birds could conceivably have gape limitations that affect the size range of turtles subject to predation, selection of larger food items relative to the time and energy expense of capture may favor such predation. The male's larger size and larger bill probably enables him to exploit larger foods more readily than can the female.

While our report appears to be the first of attempted blackbird predation on painted turtles, it is not the first of red-winged blackbirds feeding on a turtle. Janzen (1995) observed an instance of red-winged blackbird predation on a common snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*) hatchling. These observations help illustrate the myriad roles turtles play in the complex food webs of the ecosystems where they occur.

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Herpetology 2024

In this column the editorial staff presents short abstracts of herpetological articles we have found of interest. This is not an attempt to summarize all of the research papers being published; it is an attempt to increase the reader's awareness of what herpetologists have been doing and publishing. The editor assumes full responsibility for any errors or misleading statements.

FLATWOODS SALAMANDER SURVIVAL

G. C. Brooks et al. [2024, Ichthyology & Herpetology 112(1): 31-40] note that survival rates are known to vary over the course of an individual's lifetime and among individuals within a population. Quantifying the natural variability in survival rates is crucial when scaling up to infer the dynamics of populations. Using ten years of mark–recapture data from two adjacent wetlands on the Florida Panhandle, the authors investigated individual and temporal variability in survival rates of reticulated flatwoods salamanders (*Ambystoma bishopi*). Objectives were to 1) provide the first estimates of survival for the species, 2) evaluate the relationship between body size and mortality risk, 3) quantify the degree of variability in survival rates across the study period, and 4) discern whether variability in survival or detection correlates with environmental conditions. To address these objectives, the authors constructed a modified Cormack-Jolly-Seber model that includes body size and year as covariates. Mean annual survival was estimated to be 0.72 and was strongly correlated with body size; survival rates of the smallest individuals in the study were 0.5 and those of the largest individuals were 0.85. Survival also varied considerably across years, but it did not correlate with temperature extremes or rainfall. Therefore, a key priority for future research should be to identify the ecological correlates of mortality risk in *A. bishopi*. The results of this study can be integrated into demographic projections for reticulated flatwoods salamanders and will help managers to discern population viability, evaluate alternative management strategies (e.g., habitat restoration), or buffer the impacts of climate change. More broadly, this work highlights the need for more long-term studies that will garner accurate estimates of vital rates to aid ongoing recovery efforts for endangered and at-risk species.

TIMBER RATTLESNAKE ECDYSIS

M. D. Carnes-Mason and S. J. Beaupre [2023, Herpetologica 79(4):207-219] note that renewal of the epidermal tissues is often assumed to be the primary function of ecdysis in snakes. The replacement of the skin maintains a barrier against the external environment, with the timing and frequency of this renewal process considered to be a function of growth. As snakes eat and grow, they are forced to shed to accommodate the increase in body size, relating the resource environment to rates of growth and patterns of shed. It has also been suggested that shedding occurs in response to changing abiotic conditions or as a mechanism of semiochemical signaling. Resolution of the causal mechanism(s) that dictates patterns of ecdysis, and its relative importance at the population level, requires a working knowledge of when and how often snakes shed. To date, descriptions of patterns of the timing and frequency of shed events have been limited to laboratory studies and field observations of limited scope. The authors used 25 yr of radiotelemetry observations of timber rattlesnakes (*Crotalus horridus*) to describe the frequency and timing of shedding at the population level. They found that the frequency of shed events was approximately even between males and females, but that male frequency was related to body condition, whereas female frequency was correlated to reproductive condition. Further evaluation revealed that the timing of shed events in lower body condition males was randomly distributed throughout the year; timing in higher body condition males clustered around the mating season. Timing in females related to reproductive condition, with gravid females shedding early in the year and nongravid females shedding close to the peak in male–female courtship. This study indicates that shedding patterns in males are coupled to the resource environment and offer support for shedding as a growth function, but in females shedding may be more tightly coupled to reproduction, serving alternate or additional roles in adult female snakes.

IMPACTS OF WILDFIRE ON PLETHODONTIDS

A. J. Wilk and W. E. Peterman [2024, Herpetologica 80(2):199-208] note that wildfire is an increasingly common disturbance in forested landscapes that can drastically alter local habitats. Under current climate change predictions, wildfires are likely to become more frequent and severe. In regions and ecosystems that have historically infrequent fire return intervals, there is little known about how organisms will respond to the more severe and frequent wildfires predicted under climate change. In the southern Appalachian Mountains, fire has been suppressed and severe burns are historically uncommon. This region boasts immense biodiversity and is considered a biological hot spot for diversity in the salamander family Plethodontidae. These species rely upon cool, moist microclimates that may be impacted more by severe fire than by low-intensity wild or prescribed fire. In 2016, the Chimney Tops Two wildfire burned >6000 ha of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and left a mosaic of burn severity across the landscape. This presented an opportunity to examine how five plethodontid salamander species respond to and recover from a range of burn severity. Even though the landscape had been recovering for 5 yr at the time of study, populations of *Plethodon jordani*, *Plethodon glutinosus* spp., *Desmognathus wrighti*, *Desmognathus imitator*, and *Eurycea wilderae* within the burn boundary had lower abundance than those in unburned habitat. In addition, there was a trend of even lower abundances in more severely burned habitat. Evidence of recovery, as indicated by a relationship between population abundance and distance from the burn boundary, was only present for *D. imitator*. Finally, body size distributions were different between burned and unburned sites for three of the five species and individuals were larger, on average, in burned sites. This work provides insights into how terrestrial salamander populations may respond to the more severe and frequent wildfires predicted under climate change for the southern Appalachian Mountains region.

Bulletin of the Chicago Herpetological Society 59(7):107-108, 2024

Herpetological Art in the Peoria, Illinois, Zoo — March 29, 2024

Photos and story by
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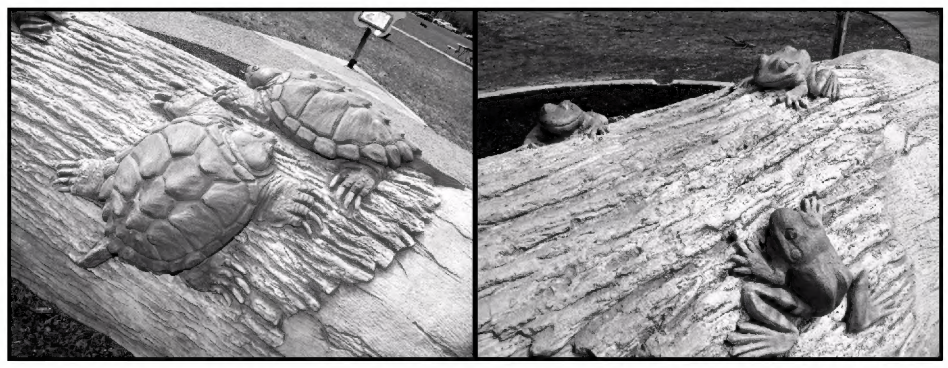
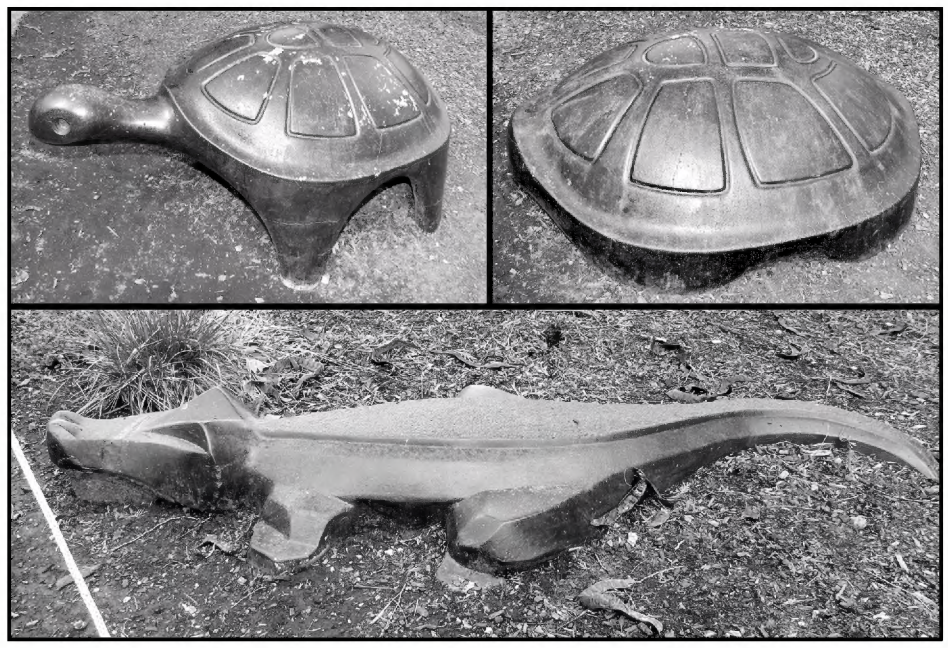
625 Lakeview Dr
Zionsville, IN 46077
drymarchonzz@hotmail.com

The Peoria Zoo (Peoriazoo.org) is located in the Glen Oak Park, north of downtown Peoria, and is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums..

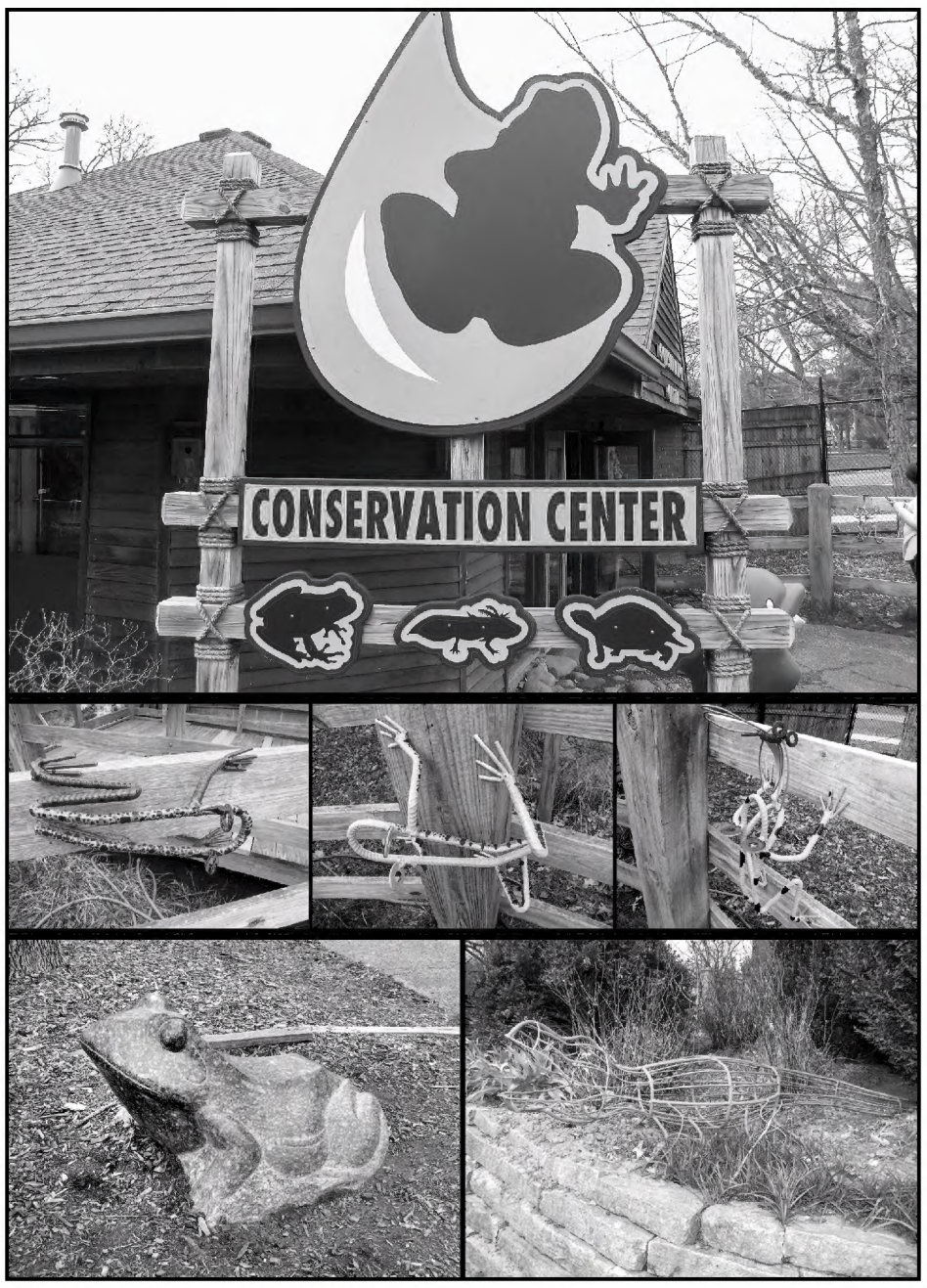
Just outside the entrance to the zoo there is a park with picnic tables and objects for children to climb and play on. There is an artificial log large enough for some children to walk through and on the log are sculptures of two snapping turtles, *Chelydra serpentina*, and three sculptures of what may be American bullfrogs, *Lithobates catesbeianus*. These sculptures are life-size. There is a sign nearby that mentions bullfrogs and specifies that they hibernate through the winter. There are no signs describing the snapping turtles.



Just inside the entrance, near the koi pond, are two large statues of turtles, made of some kind of hard black material. One turtle has its head and legs extended and the other does not, as if it has retracted its head and legs. The shell length for both is approximately four or five feet. Near the turtle statues is a statue of a crocodilian, approximately six feet long, that is made of the same black material.

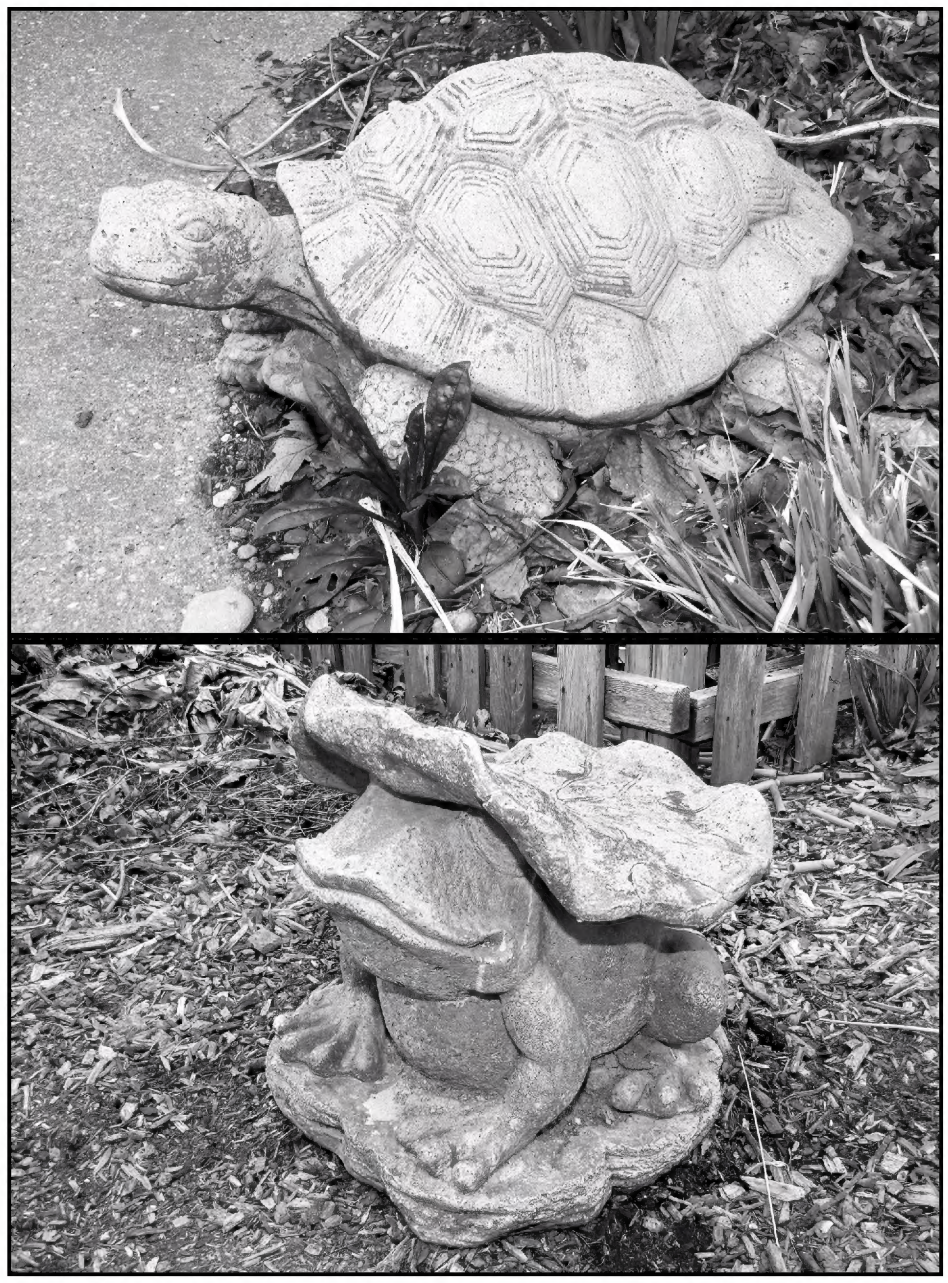


The Conservation Center includes displays of live reptiles and amphibians. Near this building is a statue of a crocodilian that is made from welded steel bars. It is approximately five or six feet long and is painted green. Also, near this building are three statues of frogs that are made from welded re-bar and are attached to a wood fence. One of these statues is painted blue; another is yellow and red; the third is painted yellow and black and has been set up with a dragonfly that the frog is in the process of trying to catch. All three of these are approximately two feet long. There is another frog statue on the ground that is approximately two feet long and, from its appearance, I think it's made from granite.



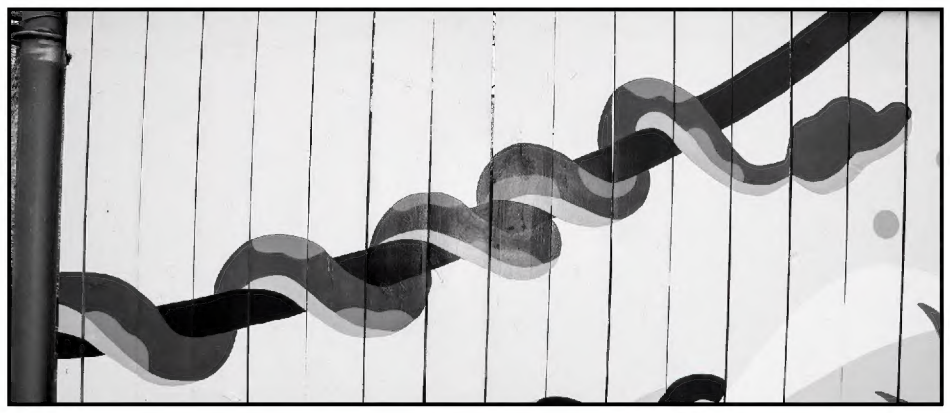
The Tropics building also holds live reptiles and amphibians. Near this building is a statue of what may be a box turtle or a tortoise that is approximately two feet long. I think it's made from concrete. There is also a statue of a frog with what is

probably meant to be a lily pad on its head. This statue is approximately two feet tall and is probably made from concrete.



Near the koi pond is another frog sculpture, perched on a rock. I tapped on it and found it to be hollow sheet metal.

Near the Zambezi River Lodge is a large wooden gate with painted images of several zoo animals. These include a snake, which is several feet long, and is shown on a tree branch. The dorsal surface of the snake is painted dark red with lighter red patches, and the ventral surface is painted tan. Down in the lower left corner of the gate there is an email identifier for the artist, micahvetter@vetterdesign.co.



Minutes of the CHS Board Meeting, June 11, 2024

A virtual meeting of the CHS board of directors via Zoom conference video/call was called to order at 7:30 P.M. Board members Kyle Houlihan, Caitlin Monesmith and Margaret Ann Paauw were absent. Nicki DeMaria also attended. Minutes of the May 14 board meeting were read and accepted.

Officers' Reports

Treasurer: Rich Crowley reviewed the May financial statements.

Media secretary: Gabrielle Evans and Caitlin Monesmith are working to move forward with our social media, based on which platforms are getting the most engagement and comments. We need to do a better job in moderating our platforms, not just allowing any post. We need to consolidate our media sites. Gaby is still looking for additional help, maybe an informal internship.

Membership secretary: Mike Dloogatch reported the second month in a row with a slight increase in membership.

Sergeant-at-arms: Tom Mikosz reported attendance of 27 at the Junior Herpers meeting and 34 at the general meeting.

Committee Reports

Shows: You Our Neighbor Picnic—South Holland—Power & Light Evangelistic Church, July 27.
Youth Nature Fest—Sherman Park—August 3.

Junior Herpers: Things are going great, 27 people at last month's meeting. The photo booth was a hit. We need more postings about the Junior's meetings. A lot of the people are just museum attendees who wander in and stay to learn.

New Business

Rich Crowley and Mike Dloogatch were shown around the Elgin Math and Science Academy by CHS member Dan Alexander. Both Rich and Mike feel it will be a great place to hold future board meetings and general meetings. Tom and Gail will arrange to visit the academy also. The space sounds like it will be a great fit for the society. There is storage space for the library, in-person and virtual capabilities, and possible use of the facility for small society fundraisers. Mike Dloogatch moved that we move the general meetings for the Chicago Herpetological Society to the Elgin Math and Science Academy starting with the September general meeting. Gail Oomens seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by Gail Oomens

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Please try to join us for the next monthly meeting of the Chicago Herpetological Society at 2:00 P.M., Sunday, July 21, at the Notebaert Nature Museum, 2430 N. Cannon Drive, Chicago. The program will be a virtual presentation about the **Creature Conservancy** in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Caitlin Monesmith will showcase the CHS Junior Herpers program at the August 18 meeting.

EXCITING CHANGES IN TIME & PLACE FOR OUR CHS MONTHLY MEETINGS

Please mark your calendars. Beginning on Wednesday evening, September 18, the monthly meetings of the Chicago Herpetological Society will take place at the **Elgin Math and Science Academy, 1600 Dundee Avenue, Elgin IL 60120**. The meetings will start at 7 P.M. Those few of you who have attended the Sunday afternoon meetings at the Notebaert Museum know that they have not been working out for us. We are hopeful that a return to our traditional Wednesday evening meeting times will restore attendance to former levels. If you are a local member, please give it a try. The new location is certainly easier to get to for many of you in the suburbs. Parking is free.

The program for the September meeting will be announced in next month's *Bulletin*.

Board of Directors Meeting

Are you interested in how the decisions are made that determine how the Chicago Herpetological Society runs? And would you like to have input into those decisions? The next board meeting will be held online. If you wish to take part, please email: rcrowley@chicagoherp.org.

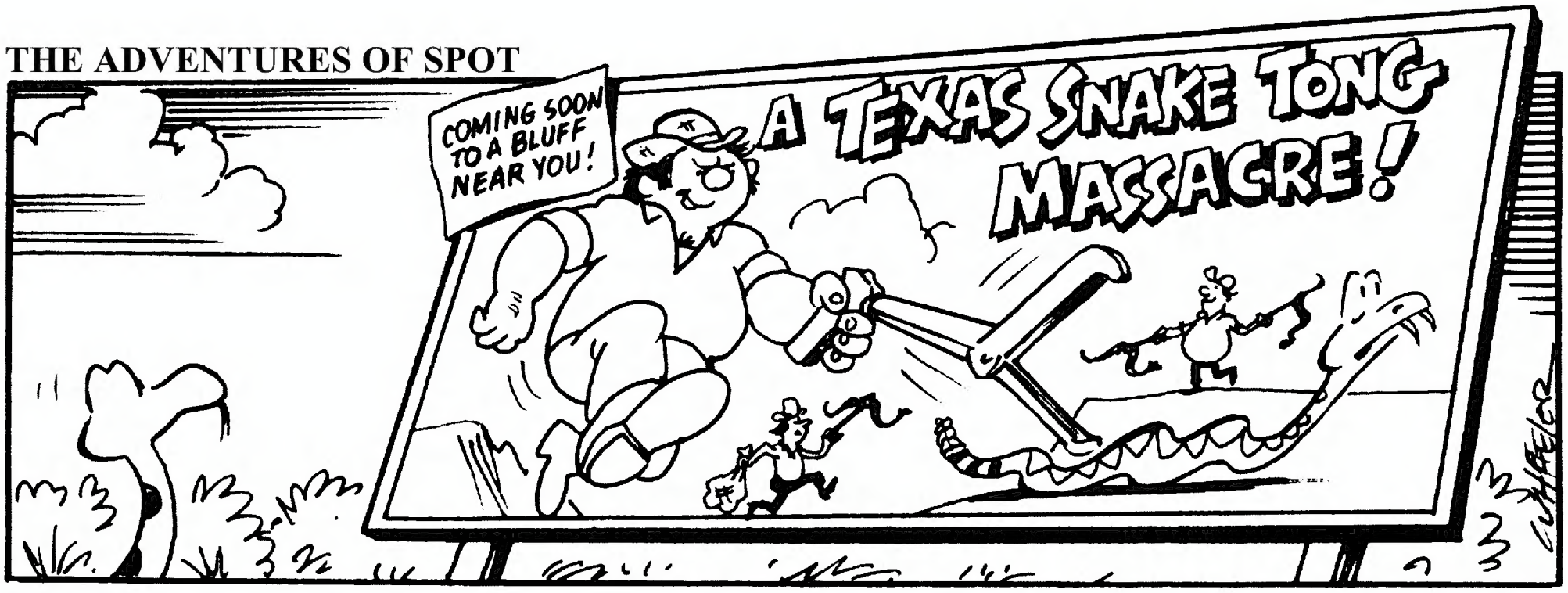
MIDWEST HERPETOLOGICAL SYMPOSIUM

The Midwest Herpetological Symposium is back on track. The St. Louis Herpetological Society will host this year's event September 20–22, at the Hilton St. Louis Airport Hotel. Watch their website and Facebook for more information when it becomes available.

NEW CHS MEMBERS THIS MONTH

Samantha J. Chavez

THE ADVENTURES OF SPOT



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